

COUNTDOWN TO GIRLS IN AVIATION DAY 2023

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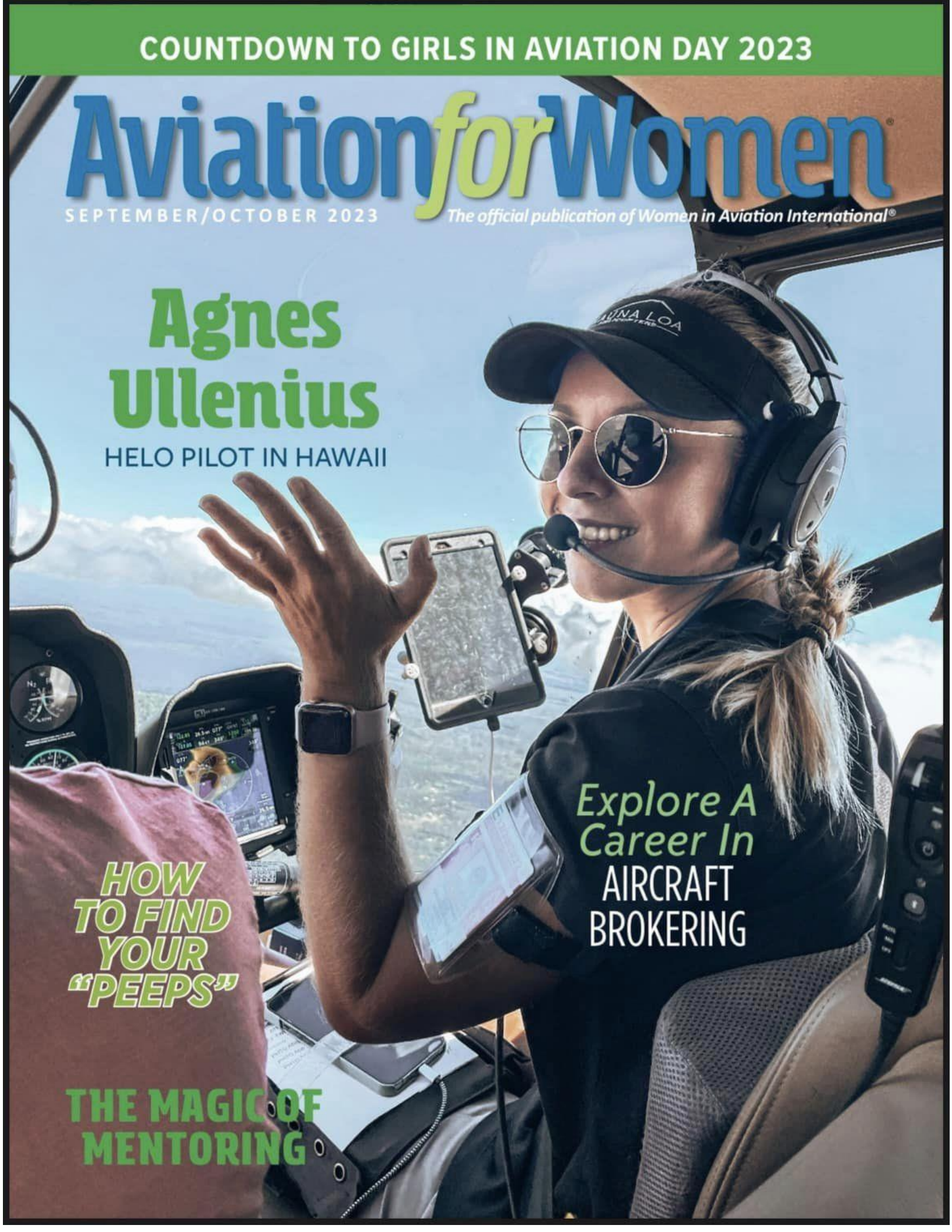
Agnes Ullenius

HELO PILOT IN HAWAII

HOW
TO FIND
YOUR
“PEEPS”

THE MAGIC OF
MENTORING

Explore A
Career In
AIRCRAFT
BROKERING





Pass the Passion

BY ROBERT S. GRANT

As a massive Canadair CL-215 water bomber rumbled by an airshow crowd in Maniwaki, Quebec, 82 miles northwest of Ottawa, seven-year-old Nathalie Fortin, WAI 70339, watched the wide-winged fire-bomber's belly doors swing open. That memory of 12,000 pounds of water thundering down and into the treetops never left her memory.



▶ Although pilots are not expected to become licensed mechanics, everyone should absorb as much understanding as possible of the aircraft they fly.



▶ Nathalie (L) and fellow manager Laurie Marin discuss the advantages of warm hangars for Select Aviation's training fleet in Gatineau across from Canada's capital city of Ottawa.

teaching ab initio students at an Ottawa flight school, she was pleased to find that the ardor which had emerged at Maniwaki years before had not diminished. In fact, constant exposure to frequent aerial hours brought new opportunities. Flying instruction was not a stepping-stone, it was a true forté and exactly the niche she sought.

Nathalie encountered an employer —Select Aviation College at Gatineau-Ottawa Executive Airport (where she obtained her initial ratings)—with 35 aircraft of several types. Select Aviation College welcomed her fresh talents and enthusiastic attitude as their director of sales and flight instructor. In classrooms, simulators, and on the ramp, a blend of teaching and management confirmed she had truly arrived in exactly the right place.

Nathalie, who speaks fluent French and unaccented English, reviews student applications and decides who is a “good fit.” Future opportunities may see new responsibilities for Nathalie as a college representative to promote enlistment internationally.

Experience originating from grass airstrips led Nathalie to encourage aspirants to invest in discovery flights when possible. Mechanical considerations aside, career seekers are obligated to enjoy whatever vocation they select. Face-to-face electronic or personal discussions, introductory flight lessons, or simulator sessions may motivate aspirants toward other paths like avionics or engineering. Critical, however, a love of learning tops it all and never stops at any level. A multi-IFR commercial pilot license can be a procedural piece of cake compared to what the industry demands.

“Hopefuls should be prepared to cut their social lives dramatically for at least two years or as long as it takes,” she stresses. “Priorities must be reviewed, and friends and family must understand the passion and come to terms with it.”

“Yes, our industry desperately needs pilots, but even lower-tier jobs such as geophysical survey and bush country charter work demand high hours,” Nathalie says. “Flight instructor ratings still seem to be the ‘foot in the door.’”

Fortunately, apprentice programs with some carriers have been developed although they may require university degrees or college diplomas. A low-time acolyte also has the option of buying an airplane, logging sufficient hours to make them attractive to employers and selling the airplane for almost the same cost. Ramp jobs in northern Canada and the United States are also job options. These positions require physical labor and patience.

As for the seven-year-old girl awed by a gigantic yellow water bomber, Nathalie knows what key elements airlines crave at hiring seminars and job fairs. Although she could join the parade to “big iron,” she prefers staying in Gatineau to guide others toward their personal pinnacles. As keen a mentor as the late Joe Scoles (James Joseph Scoles passed away April 11, 2021, at the age of 90), Nathalie has modeled herself on the same principles. →

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Robert S. Grant has published more than 2,500 magazines, journals, and newspapers of six countries and produced five aviation-related books. He is a frequent AFW contributor writing about women in aviation near his residency in Metcalfe, Canada.



▶ Nathalie and her daughter, Rosalie

Flying instruction was not a stepping-stone, it was a true forté and exactly the niche she sought.

From that momentous day, Nathalie's newfound passion for aviation never diminished. After she took her first flight in 2012, Nathalie investigated flight training options in nearby Gatineau, adjacent to Ottawa. Despite full-time self-employment as a social media specialist and mother of two, she had been contemplating another challenge and enrolled in pilot ground school.

On one side, the pleasure of hands-on flying airplanes became a blessing and on the other, an addiction developed. Her original intent was to obtain her private pilot certificate with no thoughts of pushing into an airline vocation.

Never lacking confidence, Nathalie's ability to absorb knowledge ensured success in whatever *train de vie* (way of life) selected. She persisted through two years and four months in four schools with eight instructors and made her first solo flight in October 2012.

"That first flight on my own reinforced my confidence. We were four students training together and three of us were watching our classmate leaving on a 300-mile solo cross-country," she recalls. "At that time, I just couldn't imagine myself flying alone on such a long trip but from the group of four, only two finished the course."

Her goals changed when a remarkable mentor visited the Gatineau airport. Ex-military navigator and former federal aviation inspector, James Joseph "Joe" Scoles, recognized Nathalie's appreciation for "things with wings." Impressed more

so when he learned that her interests in the aviation realm had not developed solely as a potential livelihood. At age 82, Joe decided to renew his civil instructor rating to assist in the private pilot process. He also owned a private and pristine Cessna 170 tailwheel aircraft which he offered to share.

"Joe was a huge supporter and keen cheerleader, not only for me, but anyone truly interested in aviation," Nathalie says. "He loved his Cessna 170, and the day he trusted me with his prize was a tremendous joy and that was when I discovered new challenges in landing tailwheel aircraft."

Without financial assistance and during 60-hour work weeks, Nathalie received her private pilot certificate in October 2014. With the basics in hand, she still felt no inclination to enter the field full-time. A year later, she purchased a Cessna 150 and flew more than 150 hours in less than 12 months—many times with Joe and fellow aviation aficionados.

"When I'd logged somewhere around 100 hours, Joe and I were tying up the Cessna 170 after a breakfast fly-in when he said, 'You really should do your commercial license,'" she recalls. "No matter what, the idea of such an expensive project had never crossed my mind."

After gentle persuasion, Nathalie heeded Joe's advice and finished with the commercial certificate in 2017 and followed up with an instructor rating on August 31, 2018. After



▶ Nathalie invested her finances into Cessna 150 C-FSZR for recreational flying, and managed to log sufficient hours toward a commercial pilot certificate and new career in flight instruction.



▶ Nathalie recommends that aviation enthusiasts seek a mentor such as Joseph Scoles.